

FAVERSHAM URBAN SANITARY AUTHORITY.

Report of Medical Officer of Health for
year 1907 :—

In presenting my report for the past year I must first of all call attention to the fact of an increase in the death rate, which is higher than it has been for some years. This is accounted for almost entirely by a severe epidemic of measles and whooping cough in the spring, which caused 22 deaths as against one in the previous year. That alone quite accounts for the difference in the number of deaths registered. The number of deaths of old people was also increased owing to the comparatively unseasonable temperature of the early part of the year. The number of deaths actually registered was 155 as against 137 in 1906. After applying the usual corrections for deaths in the various public institutions the corrected numbers are 170 against 153, giving a death rate for the past year of 14.1 per 1,000 of estimated population, against 12.8 in 1906, the average rate for the last ten years being 13.6.

The number of births registered was 255, males 127 and females 128. Of these 16 (5 males and 11 females) were in the parish of Preston Within. This is more than in 1906 when it was 244, but below the average of the last ten years, which is 296. The birth rate works out at 21.2 per 1,000 of estimated population.

I am glad to be able to report a decrease in the infantile mortality during the year. 25 deaths were registered of children under one year of age as against 33 in the previous year. This gives a death rate per 1,000 births registered of 98.0 against 135.2 in 1906, the average for the last ten years being 135.3. This decrease is entirely due to the small number of deaths from diarrhoeal diseases, only 2 being registered as against 10 in previous year. This is to be accounted for principally by the absence of any continual high temperature during last summer. If it had not been for the epidemic of measles and whooping cough already mentioned, which caused 6 deaths as against none in 1906, our infant mortality would have been exceptionally low.

As I have previously remarked the number of deaths due to the chief zymotic diseases shews a great increase on previous years, being 26 against 2 in 1906. 11 from measles, 11 from whooping cough and 3 from scarlet fever. These three complaints have all been epidemic in the early part of the year. It is many years since we have had anything like an epidemic of scarlet fever. The measures taken in this case limited the number of cases considerably, but unfortunately many of them were of a very severe type and the mortality was proportionately high, in spite of admission to hospital and careful nursing. As regards the other two diseases I can only emphasise what I have before said, that a great deal of the mortality in them might be prevented if only the public could be persuaded to take a more serious view of them in the early stages, and not consider them as unavoidable episodes of infant life and unworthy of medical advice until the child appears to be in imminent danger. I am glad to note there were no deaths from typhoid fever. Influenza, as usual, was prevalent in Janu-

ary and caused 7 deaths against 13 in 1906. Diarrhoea as mentioned was markedly less prevalent during 1907. On looking through the tables the only cause of death in which there is any change worthy notice is heart diseases which caused 15 deaths last year as against 11 in the previous one. Other causes remain much the same in numbers.

The number of cases of infectious disease notified to me during the year was 93 as against 86 in the previous year. In spite of the epidemic in the spring the increase is thus very small and shows that the latter part of the year was very free from notifiable diseases. As mentioned already there was a great increase in scarlet fever, 54 cases as against 21 in previous year, but diphtheria and typhoid fever shewed a great decrease, being 18 and 6 respectively as against 29 and 17 respectively in 1906. Cases of erysipelas were a little less in number; one case of puerperal fever was notified. Of these cases 56 were removed to hospital as against 44 in 1906.

| | To Hospital | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|------|------|------|
| | 1907 | 1906 | 1907 | 1906 |
| Diphtheria | 18 | 29 | 4 | 15 |
| Erysipelas | 14 | 17 | 0 | 0 |
| Scarlet Fever | 54 | 21 | 46 | 15 |
| Enteric Fever | 6 | 17 | 6 | 14 |
| Puerperal Fever | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

The small number of cases of diphtheria isolated last year is due to the fact that during the early part of the year the Isolation Hospital at Kennaways was half closed for much needed alterations and repairs. Unfortunately, just as these were entered upon the cases of scarlet fever began to increase. Arrangements were then immediately made with the Rural Authority to admit cases to their Isolation Hospital at Beacon Hill. This accommodation was soon exhausted and it was then decided to use the vacant Hospital at Luddenham for such cases. This proved sufficient to deal with the epidemic and the cases then soon began to decline in numbers. The hospital at Luddenham was in use for two months or more and 14 cases were removed there of whom 2 died of measles complicating the scarlet fever. Nine cases were removed to Beacon Hill of whom one died. 33 cases of all kinds were removed to Kennaways Hospital. Of these 2 died, 1 from scarlet fever and 1 from typhoid.

The alterations at the Isolation Hospital, Kennaways, are now entirely completed, and it is in a very smart and efficient condition. A new disinfectant has been installed and was very badly wanted. No cases of small pox have been notified. During the year the caretaker and his wife at the Hospital left, and their places were not filled up for some time. Arrangements have now, however, been made for a married couple to live there at small expense to the Authority, so that the Hospital can be kept in good condition and ready for use without delay should occasion arise.

The water supply of the Borough is from deep wells in the chalk outside the town. This has been satisfactory in quantity and quality during the year. Analysis on two occasions has given results of a reassuring character. Twelve samples have been submitted for analysis from private wells and two of these have been reported as being unsafe for drinking purposes. In these cases the wells were closed and the water laid on from the public supply.

During the year a circular has been received as to Diseased Cattle being offered for sale. The matter has been carefully looked into, and there is no doubt that unsound animals are sold for very low prices at the cattle markets, and it is very difficult to guarantee that the meat from these will not in some manner find its way to our tables, as such carcases can be easily transferred from one district to another. Co-operation between the officers of neighbouring districts will, however, render this more difficult in future. One case, in which meat unfit for food was seized, was brought to the notice of the Authority; also one consignment of fish unfit for food was condemned. The regular work of Inspection has been carried on throughout the year, and is referred to in more detail in the Sanitary Inspector's Report. The common lodging houses, bakehouses, dairies, cowsheds and slaughterhouses have all been inspected and the bye-laws enforced, and are as a whole in a satisfactory condition. In all cases attention has been called to anything requiring alteration and a good standard has been aimed at. Three premises have been registered during the year as common lodging houses in addition to the one registered last year.

The Milk Supply is a matter of the greatest importance and has received full attention. Five samples of milk have been analysed during the year and found to be of good quality. I am glad to find that the Council has decided to exercise this power more fully during the present year. The small milk shops, where milk is sold as part of a general stock, require a great deal of supervision, as the vendors keep such a mixture of articles in a small space that it cannot be easy to keep the milk free from admixture with other goods. Six such shops were registered during the year, and such shops are continually altering. Most of the proprietors are clean and careful, but it is hard to get them to see the necessity of keeping milk alwtys covered and away from other articles.

Disinfection has been carried out in all cases of infectious disease notified, and the public elementary schools have also been treated with disinfectants during the holidays. Advantage will also be taken of the new disinfectory established at the Isolation Hospital.

Sanitary Inspection of defective property has been regularly carried out, and defects remedied as discovered, either in cases of infectious disease, or where nuisances have been found to exist, either on report to me, or as discovered during house to house inspection.

Under the Factory and Workshops Act, a large amount of work has been done during the year. Every place in the Borough, which could be considered as coming under the operation of this Act, has been subjected to regular inspection. These amount to a total of 134, and 587 inspections have been made. 30 defects have been found, which have all been remedied; only 5 written notices have been required. From the Factory Inspector, 2 notices have been received, calling attention to defects observed, and these have received attention. In 3 cases, his attention was called to failure to affix an abstract of the Act. There is one underground bakehouse in use, which is in very satisfactory condition. One new bakehouse has been occupied; one very old one is about to be rebuilt. Regular inspection of outworkers has been carried out, but I must repeat the complaint made in my last annual report, that we have very great difficulty in obtaining these lists from the employers. I must ask the Authority to take stringent measures to obtain them in future if the work is to be done properly. It is not our duty to apply for them, but the Act imposes on the employers the need to send these lists twice a year to us. They have all been supplied with the necessary papers and full instructions, but have failed to carry out this duty until repeatedly applied to to do so by the Inspector and myself, which I repeat is not required of us to do as officials.

No names of outworkers resident here have been received from outside authorities. One outworker, outside the Borough, has been notified to the Authority under whom he lives.

Details of the matters referred to will be found in the various tables accompanying this report.

CHARLES J. EVERS, M.D.

February, 1908.

